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Subject: PLEASE OPPOSE SB 51

Date: March 16, 2007
From: Clarice Ryan
Subject: OPPOSE SB 51 - Accountability for Forest Fire Costs

It is totally unjust to expect victims of forest fires caused by Forest Service Agency negligence to bear the consequences of forest mis-management by that Federal Agency. This is comparable of expecting the victim of an auto accident caused by a drunken driver to pay not only for his own hospitalization and/or funeral, but also that of the perpetrator.

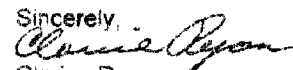
The very fact that our Congress passed the Healthy Forest Initiative and provided funding for forest fuels reduction, the known cause of these intense forest fires, is proof that they endorsed the increased protection of the Wildland/Urban interface areas. This, in spite of the fact the entire forest was in need of fuels treatment, those areas were given first priority where human populations were endangered by close proximity to Federal forest lands. A miniscule amount of available funding has ultimately been properly applied as designated. We must NOT CONDEMN people for their residence locations, when they themselves have taken invested in proper precautions, to provide safe forest conditions in their own timbered properties. Neither can we make DNRC responsible for hazardous conditions existing on Federal lands where the fires originate, when the State has performed the necessary thinning on their own lands.

Where is the justice in this bill?

Lack of sufficient Federal tax payer dollars to handle preventive measures is likewise absolutely NO EXCUSE. It is the obstinent resistance of certain individuals and groups to the basic concept of PROFIT, that is the fundamental cause of this entire situation. Free enterprise and the private sector had, through the years, provided the removal of excess material from the forest, and done so in an economically feasible manner, without dependence on the tax-payer. **THE FORESTS THEMSELVES ARE CAPABLE OF PROVIDING FOR THEIR OWN MAINTENANCE, AND NOW FOR THEIR OWN HOSPITALIZATION AND RECUPERATION !!**

Let's get over this foolish resistance to logging, and instruct the USDA to establish policies, quickly, allowing the private sector to implement the Healthy Forest Initiative provisions, applying approved procedures, as dictated by the Keegan, Fiedler study out of the University of Montana. Let's quit wasting that appropriation money in ongoing planning, research and endless philosophies and damaging legislation while our forests continue to deteriorate and burn.

I implore you to OPPOSE SB 51. Montana and its citizens simply cannot afford this serious misdirection of accountabilities and financial responsibility.

Sincerely,

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